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ABSTRACT

This guide to improving student persistence is the first part of a four-part series addressing the essential characteristics of effective instruction that have a positive impact on the academic achievement of Black and Hispanic students. Persistence is learned behavior, and lower-class students are more likely than middle-class students to observe adults who lack control of their environment and to view luck or chance as a more significant factor in success than effort or persistence. Research studies indicate that it is important to understand the relationship between persistence and the following variables: (1) achievement motivation; (2) locus of control; (3) learning styles; (4) culture, ethnicity, and social class; and (5) disruptive or delinquent behavior. The following instructional strategies support persistence: (1) opportunities for cooperation; (2) minority role models; (3) variable time options; (4) student input; (5) choices of content and process; (6) clear and challenging expectations; (7) self-assessment; (8) practice in setting goals; (9) emphasis on relevance; (10) variety of instructional modalities; (11) hands-on use of materials; and (12) awareness of cultural diversity. The following instructional systems have been used to help minority students persist: (1) cognitive instruction; (2) cooperative learning; (3) mastery learning; (4) contract learning; and (5) learning centers. Three charts illustrating learning stimuli, learning preferences, and cultural learning styles and four worksheets to diagnose and support persistent behavior are included. A list of teacher behaviors that communicate and support positive expectations and a 70-item bibliography are appended. (FMW)

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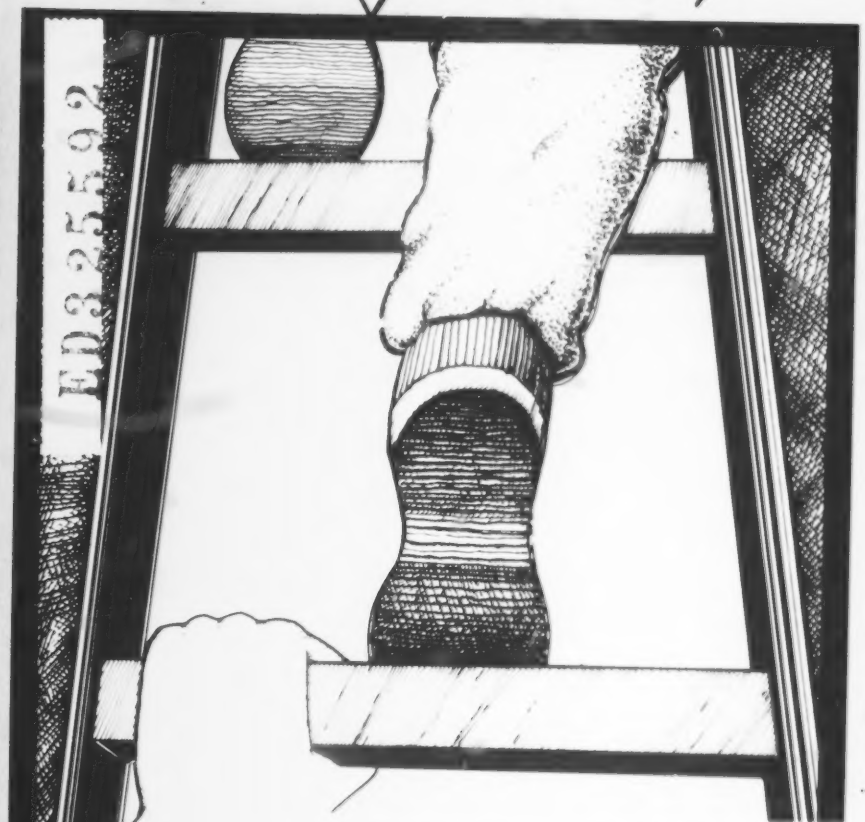
Learning to Persist



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Persisting to Learn

Learning to Persist/ Persisting to Learn

Revised Edition

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Learning to Persist/Persisting to Learn

Cross-Cultural Communication:
An Essential Dimension of
Effective Education

Improving Black Student Achievement
By Enhancing Students' Self-Image

Learning Styles:
The Joy of Diversity

MID-ATLANTIC EQUITY CENTER SERIES

5

Dedicated to the youth
of our times whose
future is at stake

6

Foreword

The academic underachievement of Black and Hispanic students is documented by the large gap between standardized test scores of minority and majority students and by the continued high rate of suspension and dropout among Black and Hispanic teenagers. This underachievement of a large and growing segment of our population is nothing short of a national crisis.

By the year 2020, Blacks and Hispanics will comprise approximately 30 percent of our population. Labor force projections indicate a severe decline in the number of blue-collar jobs and a substantial increase in jobs that require high levels of technical skill. Given this economic picture, the crisis of underachieving minority students will become a central issue in determining our nation's economic survival. We can envision a large unemployed segment of the population and, simultaneously, a severe labor shortage in numerous highly skilled occupations. It is doubtful the United States can maintain world leadership under these conditions. As Americans and in our roles as educators, we must work together to ensure that equitable opportunities exist for all students. Minority children, like all children, should be given the opportunity to succeed.

Many factors have been cited for the underachievement of Black and Hispanic students including economics, parents, community and the environment. The Effective Schools Research makes it clear that whatever influence is exerted by these factors, schools can make a difference. Researchers who study effective schools have found schools serving lower-income Black and Hispanic neighborhoods where students' performance on standardized tests is average or above. While we may not be able to control other variables, evidence indicates that schools can have a significant impact on minority students' academic performance.

With this in mind, researchers have analyzed characteristics of effective school districts, school buildings, classrooms and teachers. They have also outlined effective instructional strategies. The Mid-Atlantic Equity Center has designed this publication series to address four essential characteristics of effective instruction identified by these researchers, including:

(1) teaching students to persist in their learning in *Learning to Persist / Persisting to Learn*;

(2) understanding cultural diversity and its importance in the classroom in *Cross-Cultural Communication: An Essential Dimension of Effective Education*;

(3) helping Black students to build positive academic self-concept in

Improving Black Student Achievement By Enhancing Students' Self-Image; and

(4) incorporating learning-style differences into curriculum and instruction in *Learning Styles: The Joy of Diversity*.

Both *Learning to Persist / Persisting to Learn* and *Cross-Cultural Communication: An Essential Dimension of Effective Education* were first published by the Mid-Atlantic Center for Race Equity but are now available from the Mid-Atlantic Equity Center.

Learning to Persist / Persisting to Learn, the first in the series, will assist teachers to improve the academic self-concept of minority students by helping teachers: (1) to understand why some students fail to successfully complete a task; (2) to identify non-persisting students; and (3) to pinpoint curriculum and instructional strategies that can help students to learn to persist. Persistence is a learned behavior, and students from lower-income families are more likely than their middle-income counterparts to observe adults who lack control of their environment and to view luck or chance as a more significant factor in success than effort or persistence. *Learning to Persist / Persisting to Learn* helps teachers teach students to cope with adversity and to persist in the successful completion of a task.

Cross-Cultural Communication: An Essential Dimension of Effective Education discusses cultural differences that can lead to communication problems in the classroom and suggests behaviors that affirm rather than devalue a minority student's culture. Since our educational institutions tend to reflect the norms and values of the majority culture, cultural misunderstandings often have a negative effect on a minority student's academic performance. *Cross-Cultural Communication: An Essential Dimension of Effective Education* assists teachers to recognize and utilize student diversity in ways that enhance academic identity.

Improving Black Student Achievement By Enhancing Students' Self-Image helps teachers to better understand the factors that contribute to a positive self-image for Black students and to design and implement instructional strategies that will enhance Black students' academic self-concept. While a positive academic identity is important for all students, it is a particularly critical issue for underachieving Black students.

Learning Styles: The Joy of Diversity stresses the importance of recognizing differences in learning styles and proposes curricular and instructional strategies for underachieving females and minority students that take those differences into account.

We hope that you will find this pamphlet series helpful in your efforts to increase the academic achievement of Black and Hispanic students. We look forward to your comments on our publications.

Sheryl Denbo, Ph.D., Executive Director
Mid-Atlantic Equity Center

Acknowledgments

I wish to acknowledge the support, enthusiasm, and persistence of the many colleagues in my life whose energies and concerns are directed to equity in education, particularly for poor and minority students. I especially want to thank Dr. Sheryl Denbo, Dr. William L. Smith, Ms. Elaine Melmed, and Dr. Joan C. Wilson. Additionally, I want to acknowledge Jan Cook and Jacqueline Zakrewsky for their editorial expertise. The artwork for this publication was done by Damballah.

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Somebody said it couldn't be done
but he, with a chuckle, replied
that maybe it couldn't, but he would be one
that wouldn't say "no" 'til he tried.
So, he buckled right in,
with a trace of a grin
on his face. If he feared it,
he hid it;
and started to sing
as he tackled the thing
that couldn't be done, and
he did it!!!

Anonymous

I

Introduction: A Challenge to Teachers – Understanding and Valuing Persistence

"If at first you don't succeed, try, try again."

William E. Hickson

The ability to "hang in there" is a trait teachers frequently wish their students would acquire. That trait—persistence—is demonstrated when a person keeps working to achieve a goal despite seemingly insurmountable obstacles.

Many students, particularly those from lower-income and minority backgrounds, abandon a task when problems or stumbling blocks emerge (Kahle, 1979; Rowe, 1974, 1977). All too often these students no longer believe they can achieve academic success.

Persistence is a learned behavior. Teachers can play an important role in helping students to persist in their academic pursuits. To encourage and teach persistence, teachers need to understand its value and how to teach it to their students.

This pamphlet explains how students benefit from persistence and provides instructional strategies which encourage academic persistence.

Persistent Behavior

We've all been persistent at some time in our lives. We may have completed school, learned a new skill, lost weight or stopped smoking. Diligence led to success in reaching our goals and objectives. To be persistent, we must learn to cope with failure. Surely we can recall many times when the road to success was interrupted by obstacles or temporary failures.

Stop a minute to do the following exercises. Identify a recent incident when persistence helped you to accomplish a task; identify another instance when you lacked persistence; then ask yourself:

- What were the outcomes in both cases?
- How did I feel before and after each experience?
- What failures did I encounter on the road to success? What failures did I encounter on the road to failure? How did I cope with them?
- What would I have done differently in each case?
- How was my persistence related to the goal I set?
- What would I like to learn about persistence as a behavioral trait?
- How could I benefit by learning to be more persistent?

Now that you have examined persistence on a personal level, keep in mind that your students experience many of the same problems in trying to be persistent. The case studies which follow are examples to introduce you to some characteristics of persistent and nonpersistent behavior.

Identifying Persistence: Two Case Studies

Rosa—First Case in Point

Rosa Diaz is a 17-year-old who came with her family from Central America three years ago to live in the United States. Her education in her native country was in a small school, and while she read extremely well in her native Spanish, she did not have much mathematics and science in her curriculum.

Since her arrival, Rosa has been determined to learn English and eventually attend college. She knows that she must take SAT tests and improve her reading comprehension, as well as learn more mathematics and science. She has enrolled in a SAT preparation course for bilingual students at her school. The course has two separate sections and Rosa has received permission to attend both sections. This means that she must arrive at school by 7:30 a.m. four mornings a week. Because of her after-school job in a fast-food store and her homework, Rosa can only do the problems in the SAT workbook after church on Sundays and after 10 p.m. on weekdays. In addition, Rosa has been working with her English teacher who has volunteered to correct her essays and with a counselor to receive financial aid and scholarship information.

Rosa will be the first person in her family to go to college. Her father wants her to work full-time and help with finances, and her mother doesn't think a woman needs that much education. Because Rosa knows that getting financial help from home is not probable, she has been saving a part of her small earnings each week. The counselor has helped Rosa plan how she might work for awhile, save more money, and attend junior college part-time.

Of one thing Rosa is sure. She will go to college and have more choices in her life. She knows this as well as she knows her name!

- *What in Rosa's behavior lets you know that she is persistent?*

- *What could you, as Rosa's teacher, do to help her maintain her persistence?*

Carl—Second Case in Point

Carl Young is a quiet boy whose presence could go unnoticed in almost any group of 10-year-olds. He always goes along with the crowd, seeming to get pleasure out of just being included. He doesn't volunteer to take any leadership roles, but he really seems to enjoy playing team sports. Mr. Peters, his fifth-grade teacher, was unhappy because he realized that Carl may have to repeat the grade, since he had not completed any of the assigned projects and had very low test scores. Mr. Peters noted in reviewing test papers that Carl started to work on many problems or questions but failed to complete them.

In order to understand Carl's behavior, Mr. Peters decided to watch him during a test. He observed that midway through the test Carl put his head in his cupped hands and stared out the window for several minutes. He then raised his hand to ask permission to sharpen his pencil. After doing so, he slowly walked back to his seat where he began drawing comic-strip figures on scrap paper. Carl balled up a piece of paper and took it to the wastepaper basket. Returning to his seat for a second time, he slouched down and worked on the test paper for approximately five minutes before the bell rang for recess. With an apparent sigh of relief, he turned in the paper and hurriedly left the room, anxiously joining the others for a game of soccer.

- *What in Carl's behavior are clues that he needs help in being persistent?*
- *If you were Mr. Peters, where would you begin in trying to help Carl?*

II

Persistence Research

Persistence is not an isolated trait. Persistent behavior manifests itself in conjunction with other behavioral variables. They include:

- achievement motivation;
- locus of control;
- learning styles;
- culture, ethnicity and class; and
- disruptive or delinquent behavior.

Achievement Motivation

The need to be successful, compete with others, improve on prior performance, and set higher standards for oneself has been called achievement motivation. Some students are active, independent, optimistic, and productive despite adverse economic, social, or physical conditions. Their need or desire to be successful transcends all obstacles.

What influences these students to achieve? One theory of achievement motivation by McClelland (1956) and Atkinson (1964, 1976) states that people classified as "high achievers" demonstrate identifiable attitudes, behaviors, and patterns of activities and practices.

According to McClelland, persons with a high need for achievement do the following:

- set moderate risk-taking goals;
- strive hardest when their chances for success are moderately great;
- take personal responsibility for their efforts; and
- make use of concrete feedback.

The following profile of a motivated student has been adapted from a training manual to establish criteria for observing achievement motivation behavior (Melmed and Smith, 1982). The motivated student has learned to:

- set realistic goals based on knowledge about his or her strengths, limitations, needs, prejudices, levels of tolerance, skills and expectations;
- compete with self-set goals and better himself or herself by periodically setting new standards of excellence;

- trust and be challenged by others;
- strive to be like or better than positive role models;
- take moderate risks, assess a situation, determine the consequences of his or her actions, and take a chance even though a successful outcome isn't absolutely certain;
- force himself or herself to learn if necessary and not be discouraged or frustrated easily in a learning situation;
- seek help from others by recognizing when help is needed and understanding how to get it;
- trust school personnel by maintaining confidence and security in relationships with individuals and groups in an educational setting;
- use verbal and nonverbal feedback to make decisions and to modify and adapt behavior;
- use failure and frustration to modify behavior rather than as reasons for giving up;
- identify and experience academic success by recalling accomplishments and planning future success; and
- advocate achievement by understanding the importance of taking on challenges and being optimistic about life's possibilities.

Not all motivated students will demonstrate all of these characteristics. A student can be highly motivated and yet demonstrate only a few of these characteristics.

As with other students, the Black or Hispanic student's concept of self includes how others see him or her. The racism in our larger society has contributed to the negative self-image of many minority youth (Banks and Grambs, 1972). As a result, minority students may be fighting both self-imposed failure due to poor self-image and the lower expectations of teachers and parents who are themselves reflecting deep-seated (though often unconscious) racist assumptions.

The Protestant work ethic, a value taught in most American public schools, leads students to believe that if they work hard and give it their all, they can achieve success. An individual's worth is defined according to his or her ability to succeed. Black and Hispanic students may be learning that although success requires self-assertive behaviors, these behaviors are not appropriate for them. Some research indicates that to gain approval from society, Blacks must demonstrate non-assertive or non-achievement-oriented behaviors (Poussaint and Atkinson, 1972). Additionally, the child-rearing practices of Black parents who demand that their children conform, particularly in a predominantly White environment, may contribute to passive behavior in elementary school students. This behavior is interpreted by many White teachers as a lack of intellectual curiosity and academic assertiveness.

The problem is not that Black students have low levels of aspiration, but that those aspirations must be matched with productive academic behaviors (Gordon, 1965). Katz (1968) found that Black children tended

to have aspirations so high that they were almost impossible to achieve. This gap between aspirations and productive behaviors may come from internalizing the Protestant ethic yet never learning the behavioral patterns necessary to achieve those aspirations. It is easy to see how negative self-assessment and anxieties can result.

Research indicates that teachers may inadvertently contribute to the process by demonstrating lower expectations for low-income Hispanic and Black students (Emihouvich, 1983; Washington, 1982; Barnes, 1979; Antonopolis, 1972; Rubovits and Maehr, 1973). One way to motivate Black and Hispanic students is to help them develop positive self-images. As these students search for outlets for their self-assertiveness and approval needs, teachers must encourage and reward those behaviors that affirm a positive academic identity. (See "Teacher Behaviors That Communicate Positive Expectations" in the Appendix.)

If students fail to find academic affirmation, the passivity of their elementary school years may lead to discipline problems in junior or high school, and in extreme cases, to drug abuse, crime and violence. When Black and Hispanic youths sense disapproval of their academic assertiveness, their energy may be redirected into aggressiveness toward the academic environment.

Remembering that persistence is a learned behavior, we must help minority youngsters learn the persistence necessary to achieve their aspirations. We must learn to affirm those behaviors which may not have been traditionally supported by a racist society or by some minority families, who may inadvertently be teaching their children counterproductive survival skills. If we re-examine the profile of a motivated student, we can develop methods to teach students to set goals, take risks, seek and get assistance, trust others, cope with failure and frustration, experience and celebrate success, and value achievements.

Locus of Control

Closely related to both achievement motivation and persistence is locus of control. Locus of control is the extent to which an individual accepts responsibility for what happens to him or her. Rowe (1974, 1977) strongly suggests a relationship between a student's sense of control over fate and that student's degree of persistence in the problem-solving process.

Individuals who believe that they can control events through their own behavior have an internal locus of control. Those who believe that they have no control over what happens to them and who usually attribute happenings to luck, other people, or environmental circumstances have an external locus of control. A growing body of research indicates that students' sense of control over their environment and social interactions is strongly correlated with achievement (Deci and

Ryan, 1982). For example, students with an internal locus of control demonstrate higher achievements in science (Burrow, 1978). Beane (1985) notes that

> Historically, the Black, Hispanic, and Native American populations have felt that they have had minimum control over their fate; many of today's minority students reflect that legacy with an external locus of control. A high proportion of these students do not believe that there is a logical explanation for natural phenomenon, as evidenced by their responses on the National Assessment of Science tests.

An external locus of control often arises from circumstances of poverty and racism. In poverty, adult role models are more likely to have given up or to feel defeated. They may not see any relationship between their own hard work and their poverty. In a racist society, minority children may be taught by their parents that rewards are discriminately and inconsistently dispensed. Therefore, immediate and direct gratification are often strong motivators.

Students who believe that they have no control over events in their lives may have difficulty working through a challenge or problem until it is solved. They find it difficult to believe that what they do can actually make a difference in the outcome of a problem, project, experiment, or grade (Beane, 1985).

Deutsch (1967) found that as a result of this learned mistrust and sense of being viewed as inferior by the larger society, Black children tend to question their own competencies and are unwilling to persist in attempting to solve difficult problems. They are then apt to adopt a face-saving "who cares?" attitude.

Teachers can determine students' locus of control in many ways. Nonjudgmental and straightforward discussion of feelings about the causes of behavior and events is a first step. Teachers can also use formal questionnaires or scales designed to determine students' locus of control, such as the Rotter Internal-External Scale (Rotter, 1966).

In order for Black and Hispanic children to find motivation for persistence, teachers must communicate clearly to these students that they can achieve. Teachers can counter the erratic reward system set up in the larger society through a conscious effort to establish equitable, consistent rewards and positive expectations that help students experience and recognize their control over learning outcomes.

Learning Styles

One of the major breakthroughs in our understanding and valuing of diversity is the notion that students have different learning styles. No

longer do effective teachers expect all students to respond to the same mode of instruction. Yet, even with this knowledge, many teachers unknowingly penalize students who do not respond well to either the teachers' preferred mode of teaching or to standard school procedures, teaching techniques, and curriculum that often have a built-in learning-style bias. This bias can be compounded by cultural differences between teacher and students.

A student's preferred learning style is the most comfortable, expedient, and pleasurable way for that student to learn. Research indicates that students learn best when teaching styles, learning styles, and physical and environmental factors coincide with student preferences. Perhaps students don't persist in learning because their lessons are presented in ways that students find difficult to comprehend. Rita and Kenneth Dunn (1979) have developed a model of learning style elements that illustrates the role of persistence in student learning. The Dunns describe learning styles as "the manner in which at least 18 different elements of four basic stimuli affect a person's ability to absorb and retain information, values, facts or concepts." The basic stimuli and related elements in this model are listed below:

Environmental	**Sociological**
– Sound	– Peers
– Light	– Self
– Temperature	– Pair
– Design	– Team
	– Adult
	– Varied
Emotional	**Physical**
– Motivation	– Perceptual
– ***Persistence***	– Intake
– Responsibility	– Time
– Structure	– Mobility

Because persistence is only one factor, teachers need to know a student's complete learning profile before identifying possible interventions. What works with one nonpersistent student may not work with another.

The value of this model lies in perceiving the relationship of persistence to other elements in the paradigm. For example, if a student prefers having a measure of responsibility, working with one other person, and moving about, the teacher can attempt to accommodate these elements while working on encouraging persistent behaviors.

Having other preferences met provides security in the learning environment which in turn enhances efforts at encouraging persistence.

Witkin (1977) presents learning-style models known as "field dependent" and "field independent." The field-dependent learner tends to be more aware of the social and personal impact of the learning experience and senses the practical value of the information being taught. Materials and concepts need to be relevant to the learner. The field-dependent learner pays attention to context. Thinking tends to be whole or global. This learner is thus greatly affected by both criticism and practical-utility. For these reasons, it has been suggested that the term "sensitive," indicating an awareness of relatedness, be used in place of "dependent" (Ramirez et al., 1975). The corresponding field-sensitive teaching style is characterized by personalized, highly affective instruction that outlines for the student the utility of learning. The learning environment is warm and student-centered, providing feedback but avoiding a negative tone so that any critical comments are not taken personally.

In contrast to the field-sensitive student is the field-independent student, who tends to be interested in concepts for their own sake and to have self-defined goals. This student functions successfully in self-structured learning, focuses on specifics, and remembers details. The field-independent learner enjoys learning isolated information and likes to work in an independent, teacher-centered, and impersonal environment. The chart below outlines differences between field-independent and field-sensitive learners.

Learning Preferences

Field-Independent Students:	Field-Sensitive Students:
– independent projects, working alone	– group projects, sharing, discussions
– hypothesis-testing approaches	– personal examples, anecdotes, stories
– solving problems	– relating learning to own experiences
– a focus on details, moving from specific to general (phonics, structured rules in spelling and mathematics)	– a focus on the big picture, an overview, moving from the general to the specific (whole-word, language experience, reasons for rules)
– clear grading criteria with specific feedback	– praise, assurance, working to please others, frequent interaction with teachers

Neither style is indicative of a higher intelligence level. Cognitive style doesn't determine *how much* we learn but rather *how* we learn. There is some evidence that Black and Hispanic students tend to be field-sensitive learners (Hale-Benson, 1982; Ramirez and Castenada, 1974) while traditional classroom structures and curriculum tend to favor field independence. For example, schools traditionally have been teacher-centered, encouraging students to work independently in an objective but impersonal environment. Most school schedules and routines are organized into small pieces taught in isolation from each other and from social and political contexts and practical applications. The very structure of traditional education has a built-in bias in favor of the field-independent student.

When White teachers teach minority students, learning-style differences and curricular traditions may cause a gap between what is taught and what is learned. Ramirez and Castenada (1974) suggest that teachers tend to give higher evaluations to students whose learning-style preferences coincide with theirs. Evidence indicates that some of the unstructured, open-ended, or highly competitive approaches to learning may actually inhibit academic achievement in many minority children because these strategies may be incompatible with the way learning is approached in their culture.

It needs to be emphasized, however, that student diversity is as wide within ethnic groups as it is between groups. Gordon (1970) warns that educators often treat a minority population "as if it were a homogeneous group despite the mounting evidence that heterogeneity within the several subgroups so designated may be a more crucial problem in educational planning."

It is important for teachers to be aware of possible style conflicts and needs. Effective teachers adapt and modify their preferred instructional style.

Learning styles can be identified through informal observations and interviews or through formal learning-styles inventories. Variety among students' learning styles requires variety in instructional approaches.

Culture and Other Sociological Factors

Many stumbling blocks impede the development of persistent behavior in students who are economically and socially out of the mainstream. The teacher who wishes to nurture persistence in low-income and culturally diverse students must be:

- aware of learning styles supported by students' cultures;
- sensitive to cross-cultural communication difficulties; and
- aware of culturally based intrinsic and extrinsic rewards.

When students are able to relate the culture and values of their families, peers, and community to academic content, there is a higher level of motivation and persistence to achieve (Grant, 1975). It is important that what is to be learned clearly relates to the student's understanding of self, status within the culture, and relationships with others who are significant in the student's life. If these significant others value the results of student academic persistence, the student will become an active, participating, motivated learner (Della-Dora and Blanchard, 1979).

Unfortunately, much of the standard curriculum presents negative racial and sexual information for groups other than those in the dominant culture. Much of the curriculum and the processes of delivery have not changed to any great extent over the years (Della-Dora and Blanchard, 1979). To avoid both the negative effect on the identity of minority students and the biased attitudes of majority students, teachers can help students to analyze the content of what they are reading and hearing in order to become skillful in identifying biases and stereotypes.

Cultural conflicts may interfere with a minority student's ability and desire to persist academically. Gilbert and Gay (1985) have presented a useful outline of areas of conflict between the culture of the school and that of urban Black students. These conflicts are listed below:

- The learning styles of Black children tend to be field-dependent (Hale-Benson, 1982), whereas the culture of the school generally favors field-independence.
- Learning styles of Black children tend to value working with others, while most traditional schools emphasize individual learning and competition.
- Black children value "efforts" toward achievement, whether successful or not; however, the school generally rewards only the successful completion of tasks.
- The interactional style of Black students tends to include a "stage-setting" phase prior to task involvement or performance, which means preparation of the physical environment and the psychological self for total involvement and behavior. Teachers may misinterpret this behavior as distracting and respond negatively, thus discouraging persistence.
- Because school norms generally require precise, concise, undramatic, written communication, Black students must often "translate" from the preferred oral, expressive communication to the utilitarian, written product to demonstrate achievement. The school's focus on written communication can be a barrier to effective assessments of many Black children whose primary mode of communication is oral and dramatic (Kochman, 1981).

- Many Black students have learned to involve themselves totally in the learning process not only cognitively but also physically and emotionally. This behavior can be misinterpreted as disruptive or disrespectful by a middle-class teacher who does not understand the physical movement and emotionality of the Black child.

- Passing tests in their own community is an ongoing and manageable activity for Black youngsters requiring verbal ability, dramatic non-verbal and verbal nuances, and dexterity. Both the demonstration of knowledge and creativity and quickness in delivery style are important, but these test-taking skills do not transfer well to the traditional school setting.

Commitment to the academic success of Black students clearly requires a sensitivity to the need for resolving cultural conflicts between school and community. Persisting in the face of these conflicts is more than many students, who see themselves as powerless, can manage. The teacher must affirm those behaviors needed to demonstrate achievement in the larger academic community, while simultaneously understanding the cultural and learning-style diversity that minority students bring to the learning environment.

Halverson (1979) asks two provocative questions: (1) "Are there conditions of race/ethnicity or sex which affect one's ability to be a self-directed and self-responsible learner?" and (2) "Is there a possibility of different learning styles by sex, race, and ethnicity? That is, are there cultural as well as individual differences that affect the teaching-learning process?" Halverson has developed an innovative cultural learning-styles chart in order "to create a structure which would help educators to identify cultural patterns relevant to learning styles and suggest classroom instructional strategies." Halverson explains how she derived the documentation for the cultural patterns:

> Cultural patterns for each racial/ethnic and sex group are based on the references and research primarily carried out by members of the group in question. Additionally, once the chart was developed, members of each racial/ethnic and sex group who are familiar with research on cultural differences were consulted to test the validity of the constructs shown.

Halverson warns us that selected patterns are not intended to refer to all members of each group. Many individual differences exist within groups.

Cultural Learning Styles*

Questions About Values, Beliefs, and Behavior	*Selected Cultural Patterns of Racial/Ethnic and Sex Groups*	*Suggested Classroom Instructional Strategies*
Child-Adult Relationships		
1. Does the child obey the adult because of his/her role as adult or must respect be earned?	*Low-income Urban Black* Respect is earned by adult relating to child as an individual. Child responds to shame and to avoidance of physical punishment. Child may openly confront adult if respect is not earned.	Teacher needs to earn respect by relating to students personally.
	Traditional Native American Leaders chosen by community and will stay as long as community accepts them. Older adults seen as wise.	Teacher can gain respect if he/she demonstrates acceptable behavior. Older teachers may easily gain more respect.
	Traditional Mexican American Respect is given to adult if adult demonstrates approved values, such as contributing to community.	Same as above.
	Middle-class White Respect is earned. Boys allowed more open disagreement; girls not encouraged to be aggressive and disagreement more passive and hidden. Child responds to guilt, withdrawal of love, and external rewards.	Teacher may need to encourage children away from external rewards, such as grades, in order to be self-directed.
2. Does the child seek a relationship with the adult which is friendly and personal or formal and task-oriented?	*Traditional Mexican American* Child seeks friendly and personal adult relationships.	Teacher needs to arrange instructional time so that he/she can work with students in a small group and in individualized situations where personal feelings and experiences can be shared. Since assistance to others is given freely without asking for it and is highly valued, teacher needs to be sensitive to need for help. Older students also need to experience working in a more formal and task-oriented situation.
	Middle-class White Child functions in relationship which is somewhat formal and task-oriented.	Child can try working independently of teacher; interactions with teacher can focus on task at hand. Child working alone should not be perceived as rejecting teacher or other children.

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Cultural Learning Styles—*Continued*

Questions About Values, Beliefs, and Behavior	*Selected Cultural Patterns of Racial/Ethnic and Sex Groups*	*Suggested Classroom Instructional Strategies*
3. Is the child encouraged to disagree or challenge the adult on ideas or is disagreement seen as disrespectful?	*Traditional Native American* Respect shown to adult does not allow disagreement. Adult perceived as wise, particularly if old.	Teachers should avoid placing students in a position which encourages them to disagree. Teachers who perceive themselves as equal to students may find students don't share that opinion. Students may be unsure how to act in this situation.
	Middle-class White Child is encouraged to challenge adult on opinions.	Teacher can play "devil's advocate" to stimulate independent thinking.
Child-Child Relationships		
4. How do boys and girls interact with each other?	*Traditional Mexican American* Physical contact and discussion of sex are not sanctioned between adolescent boys and girls.	Human relations and physical education activities which encourage physical contact between boys and girls should be avoided so that girls are not placed in a position where school encourages them to violate their self-respect.
5. Does the child work well with children who are older, younger, and/or the same age?	*Low-income Urban Black* Children are frequently partially cared for by older siblings. After about age six, children relate mostly to peers.	Cross-age tutoring and multi-age classrooms can be used effectively.
6. Does the child work well independently or cooperatively with other students?	*Low-income Urban Black and Traditional Mexican American* Children are encouraged to help siblings, particularly younger ones. Families tend to be large and may include cousins. Competition discouraged. Peer groups tend to be strong and give members support.	Small group situations where students cooperate, tutoring and paired learning are encouraged. Where peer groups are strong, it may be helpful to maintain existing peer group as instructional group in classroom. Students may need more practice working alone.
	Traditional Native American Individual competition or demonstrating achievement in front of a group is discouraged. Competition appropriate in sports with teams.	Same as above.
	Middle-class White Male Working independently is highly valued.	Students can learn when working by themselves and may need skill development in working cooperatively.
	Traditional Female Girls are not encouraged to solve problems independently. Friendliness and ability to get along with others valued, so conflict and disagreement are frequently hidden.	Female students may need skill development in facing independent tasks and in reducing test anxiety.

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Cultural Learning Styles—*Continued*

Questions About Values, Beliefs, and Behavior	*Selected Cultural Patterns of Racial/Ethnic and Sex Groups*	*Suggested Classroom Instructional Strategies*
7. How is status achieved?	*Traditional Mexican-American* Working for the benefit of family and community and assisting others are highly valued.	Small group situations where students can cooperate. Tutoring and paired learning are encouraged. If competition with others is used, even those who excel may not want to participate in outshining their peers. Students need practice working in competitive situations, such as timed tests, so that they can also do well in these situations.
	Low-income Urban Black Rivalry and competition are discouraged in augmented families and working for benefit of family is emphasized. Status is also given for one's communicative style.	Teacher should avoid embarrassing student in front of peers. Direct confrontation better handled privately with students.
	Traditional Native American Person should be developed in many spheres of life, including spiritual, bodily, and artistic ability, not only marketable skills. Dignity in front of peers highly valued.	Teacher should develop program to facilitate holistic development.
	Middle-class White Male Achievement and being the best highly valued in academic and athletic areas.	Students will respond to competitive situations where they can excel. If they perceive they cannot compete, they may give up. Relying on competition is questionable since only those who feel comfortable in succeeding may respond. Status for working cooperatively needs to be encouraged.
	Traditional Female Physical appearance and friendliness valued. Academic achievement negatively valued as girls approach adolescence since this is seen as unfeminine, particularly in science and math. Approval from males is often negatively related to academic success.	Female students need to overcome fear of rejection for excellence. They may need opportunities to compete only with other females. They also need to be encouraged to use their abilities when working with male students.

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Cultural Learning Styles–*Continued*

Questions About Values, Beliefs, and Behavior	*Selected Cultural Patterns of Racial/Ethnic and Sex Groups*	*Suggested Classroom Instructional Strategies*
8. Does the student become more involved in the task or social surroundings?	*Traditional Female, Traditional Mexican-American, and Low-income Urban Black* Child is sensitive to feelings of others. "Soul" or empathetic understanding, the ability to participate in the feelings of others or the capacity to interject one's own emotions into a situation to be able to analyze subjectively all the nuances of feelings in that situation, is valued among low-income urban blacks.	Teacher needs to allow time for students to relate personally to each other before working together; tasks may not be completed successfully unless human relations have been attended to.
Cognitive Style		
9. Is the child more analytic or global in problem solving? *Analytic:* Field independent, gives attention to parts and details; abstract thinking, spatial ability, and analytic problem solving skills; inductive thinking or forming generalizations *Global:* Field sensitive or field dependent, gives attention to the whole contextual field; holistic thinking.	*Traditional Native American, Traditional Mexican-American, Traditional Female, and Low-income Urban Black* Global style. Holistic thinking is encouraged. Ways of knowing can include subjective and intuitive approaches. Artistic as well as intellectual pursuits are encouraged. Analytic areas such as math and science are discouraged for females.	Use personalized and holistic approaches; concepts presented in humanized story forms ("S" is a snake); analogies instead of dictionary definitions. May need to develop analytic style.
	Middle-class White Male Analytic style. Encouraged from young age to think abstractly. Emotions should not enter into thinking; thought should be logical, empirical.	Learns well from graphs, charts, formulas. May need to develop holistic approach to conceptual style.

*This chart is presented in its complete form as it appears in Halverson (1979).

Halverson notes that culturally diverse groups tend to be more field-dependent than White males, who tend to be more field-independent. In her opinion, school and classroom policies and procedures tend to be structured for field independence; thus, the educational structure tends to favor White males. The result is an educational system that short-circuits the potential contributions of other groups.

Not until we truly appreciate the richness of accomplishments that can come from cognitive and cultural diversity will we fully develop

curricular strategies that allow and encourage the expression of this diversity. Many minorities have learned to operate successfully in the mainstream culture, i.e., they become bicognitive and bicultural. If students were encouraged to maintain their own culture and values while learning to operate successfully in the dominant culture, we could greatly increase this pool of talent.

Halverson's chart offers insight into teaching styles and teacher-student relationships that foster effective cross-cultural communications. For example, teachers should avoid embarrassing Black students in front of peers. Confrontations are best handled in private in order not to jeopardize the student's status and self-esteem. Cooperative, small-group learning situations help to get Black and Mexican-American students involved and focused on tasks. However, these students need time to socialize before they begin work. For them, climate is an important ingredient for learning. Additional skill development may be needed for independent work.

You may need to understand cultural differences in your classroom in order to support the development of persistence in culturally accommodating ways. For example, the Hispanic student who learns to value and practice cooperative behaviors in the home and community may be threatened by norms of heavy competition in the classroom. This student may feel alienated by work that does not permit discussion and peer assistance.

Once again, it must be remembered that many cultural and class differences exist within groups. Middle-class Black students may behave more like middle-class White students than like working-class Black students. Nevertheless, it is only through understanding the cultural heritage of our students that we can devise effective strategies to encourage persistence.

Multicultural education is not simply a recognition of holidays, foods, histories, and role models. It is an appreciation of diversity in cultural values, nonverbal behavior and meanings, and cognitive styles. Our goal, as educators, should not be to help everyone succeed in the same way, but to help everyone succeed in ways that best reflect their own cultural styles and values.

Disruptive or Delinquent Behavior

The dropouts and the "pushouts" are the students most at-risk. Disruption, delinquency, and truancy are all symptoms of a tremendous disaffection with school and a last step in abandoning all hope for academic achievement. Delinquent and disruptive behaviors stem largely from experiences of failure in school. These behaviors may result from individual, familial, and learning problems, but they are often the results of failure of the educational system to recognize and affirm

students who feel either threatened or unchallenged or both (Lawrence, 1985). These students perceive the educational environment as dull, unmotivating, and unaffirming (Csikszentmihilyi and Larson, 1978). Very often students who misbehave in the classroom are sending messages indicating a need for help.

Our challenge is to find ways to respond to students who feel frustrated, bored, neglected, and disliked or unimportant in the classroom community. We can identify strategies to provide social support and personal affirmation that help the disruptive student acquire persistence in academic areas rather than in disruption or delinquency (Pink, 1982).

Making personal contact with a student, understanding the student's frame of reference, hearing the student's concerns and interests non-defensively, and perhaps jointly exploring and providing attractive choices for learning can assist the student in finding motivation for persisting to learn. The disproportionate numbers of Black and other minority students who are suspended for disruptive behavior is testimony to an enormous problem in cross-cultural miscommunication and unmet educational needs in our schools. The extra time it takes to address these needs may literally save a child.

III

Instructional Systems That Encourage Persistence

Many students are persistent achievers in non-academic areas, such as sports. We must find ways to help students transfer this persistent behavior to academic achievement. Helpful instructional strategies provide or encourage:

- opportunities for cooperation;
- minority role models;
- variable time options;
- student input;
- choices of content and process;
- clear and challenging expectations;
- student self-assessment;
- practice in setting short- and long-term goals;
- emphasis on relevancy to students' worlds, building on the students' frame of reference;
- a variety of instructional modalities (visual, audio, tactile, group, individual, and pairs);
- opportunities to use hands-on materials; and
- an awareness of cultural diversity;

The following instructional systems have been used effectively to help students persist in learning:

- cognitive instruction;
- cooperative learning;
- mastery learning;
- contract learning; and
- learning centers.

Cognitive Instruction

One of the responses to "back to basics" has been a renewed commitment to the development of thinking skills (Costa, 1985; Jones, 1986). Cognitive instruction or the development of thinking skills helps students process information meaningfully and learn how to learn. It helps students learn higher-order thinking processes in each subject.

Jones (1986) provides evidence that cognitive instruction effectively reaches reluctant learners, helping them learn persisting behaviors. Students develop learning strategies through reading, solving problems, and taking more responsibility for their own learning.

This approach requires that the teacher develop both a process orientation and strategies that build on the student's current knowledge. The teacher also needs to challenge the scope of the student's thinking and learning strategies, pushing the student to explore new and more productive ways of learning. An awareness of the various cultural perspectives brought to the learning environment by the student is an essential part of understanding, assessing, and challenging the student.

In this model, comprehension develops from linking new information to that already known, forming and testing hypotheses about the meaning of problems and readings, determining the best study method, and continually reshaping learning when new data is available. Rote memorization and tricks for linking information without comprehension are not considered criteria for learning.

Jones (1986) identifies three stages to cognitive instruction: before, during, and after. "Before" involves reviewing past learning, discussing new and needed vocabulary, making intelligent guesses or hypotheses of understandings, and activating any prior knowledge which seems to relate. In the "during" stage, students seek clarification, begin to evaluate their predictions and hypotheses, and separate needed from unneeded information. "After" instruction is a time to organize by categorizing and summarizing what has been learned and how it fits into the student's total comprehension.

The success of teaching thinking skills to low-achieving students substantiates the need to shift from the current strategy of providing mostly low-order thinking skill experiences for underachieving students. Teaching higher-order thinking skills through a structured curriculum helps to direct, motivate, and challenge underachieving students (Jones, 1986).

Teaching thinking skills requires the recognition that problem-solving is not a standard process learned lockstep by all students. Rather, productive thinking must be learned. The integration of "old" information with new information to find new understandings of the world can be taught. This approach is consistent with the field-sensitive modes of many nonpersistent minority students. When students are taught to think productively, they will have both the skills necessary to persist and also the building blocks for positive academic identity.

Cooperative Learning

Children need to be accepted and affirmed by their peers. Meeting these needs is a higher priority than academic achievement for many students. Students who feel accepted and affirmed will have energy for

persisting in academic work. Working with peers in a cooperative way provides an opportunity for the student to contribute and to be valued. Slavin (1982, 1984) notes, however, that cooperative "incentives," not just cooperative tasks, lead to positive effects from cooperative learning methods. Students who experience cooperative environments and incentives have more self-esteem and find more personal acceptance than those who do not experience cooperative learning (Slavin, 1980). Cooperative learning is particularly valuable for Black and Hispanic students whose cultures and/or learning style preferences value a cooperative rather than a competitive environment.

In cooperative experiences, students work and learn together, using each other as resources. These experiences may occur in study groups, learning teams, or projects. Student Team Learning, a cooperative learning curriculum developed by Johns Hopkins University, demonstrated significant academic gains for all students, but particularly for the reluctant and underachieving learner (Slavin, 1980, 1982). Working with others, seeing new approaches to the learning task, feeling valued and having responsibility for a group product or the learning of others can all motivate students to persist.

Mastery Learning

Mastery learning systems define aptitude as the "amount of time it takes" to learn material, not as the capability to master it (Joyce, 1980). Low aptitude in a given learner, then, means that it will take longer to achieve mastery than it will for a student with high aptitude. Assuming that almost any student can master a set of objectives if given time, an instructional strategy that provides adequate time and materials assures eventual mastery.

The connection between persistence and mastery learning is clear. It is difficult to continue trying to learn when there is inadequate time, the material appears overwhelmingly long and complicated, or communication between student and teacher results in confusion and misunderstanding about what is to be learned. Clarity of objectives, appropriate and manageable enabling activities, and manageable units of work within feasible time frames can provide incentives for persisting.

A system of mastery learning (Bloom, 1971) has the following characteristics:

- objectives are linked to the purpose of a course or unit of instruction;
- the unit is subdivided into smaller sub-units, each with its own clearly defined objectives;
- appropriate and varied learning materials are identified and an instructional strategy is selected;

- diagnostic processes measure progress and identify any problems the student might have; and
- diagnostic data determine additional instructional needs.

Persistence can be blocked when students are confused about what is expected of them. Expectations may be miscommunicated, whimsically changed, or defined differently for various students in inequitable ways. The mastery learning model helps to assure clarity of objectives and the ongoing checking of skill development with remediation provided at crucial times. In addition, learning materials which serve only a single learning style may block many students from achieving objectives. The mastery learning model requires a variety of instructional materials and strategies.

You can apply the mastery learning approach in a variety of creative ways. Cooperative learning can be an effective aspect of mastery learning, particularly when students have not reached a high level of independent learning. Students may work in support groups and as peer instructors. Individualized learning packets can be developed and made available. Mastery learning can incorporate mobility, special interests, and multi-media possibilities. Additionally, mastery learning can and should be utilized to teach higher-order thinking skills.

Contract Learning

A student contract establishes a formal agreement between teacher and student to achieve objectives in mutually satisfying ways. Contracts can be developed in a number of ways and should be written out and signed by both teacher and student. The following are different forms that a contract might take:

- a pledge;
- a short-term contract; or
- a long-term contract.

A pledge is a short agreement to do a specific, one-objective task. Clarity of the task is important, and materials to be used should be clearly identified and agreed upon. The student offers input on the process and content. Monitoring by the teacher to check on student understanding and to provide encouragement must be a clearly understood part of the pledge.

A short-term contract involves one or two objectives with activities spelled out by the teacher and responded to and added to by the student, with clear dates set for reporting progress to the teacher. Monitoring is also needed in this system to assure that the student has not been blocked in efforts to achieve. Teachers can help students through any blocks by asking questions that direct students to produce insights of their own.

Long-term contracts may be more complex. They may be designed by the teacher and student to cover a large unit of study, or they may be designed by the student and submitted to the teacher for review. Long-term contracts may not be possible until a series of short-term contracts have been satisfactorily completed that seem to fit the style of the student. Students with special interests respond well to long-term contracts or projects which can demonstrate an entire semester of achievement. Science projects are often well-suited for this kind of contract.

A key component in learning to persist is learning to establish goals. Contracts help students to set short-term and long-term goals. Teachers can use contracts to help students recognize and celebrate success or to deal with frustration while persisting in the task at hand.

Learning Centers

A learning center is usually a part of the regular classroom, developed with a specific skill or goal in mind. It may support a particular mode of interaction that offers students an opportunity to learn specific skills through a number of approaches.

The purpose of a learning center may be:

- to focus on a learning unit with objectives adaptable to a variety of interesting topics;
- to focus on a general topic with a hierarchy of objectives;
- to provide more environmental options for students; or
- to encourage student input and application of school objectives to students' interests and career possibilities.

In a learning center that focuses on a learning unit with objectives adaptable to a variety of interesting topics, the student uses materials in a self-paced, self-selected way. Activities are clear for achievement of any objective. The options may vary in application, content, and/or modality. For example, a unit on fractions in a learning center may have activities related to sewing, cooking, sports, drafting, art and music. Additionally, supporting materials such as filmstrips, transparencies, worksheets, puzzles, manipulatives, materials with directions and grid paper may be utilized.

To focus on a general topic with a hierarchy of objectives, a learning center might have exploratory activities to motivate and arouse interest in a topic. Small groups select a discussion question and talk about the topic, relating their own experiences to the topic.

To provide more environmental options for students, the learning center might be an open center, similar to a library, where students negotiate time to participate. Highly mobile students respond well to this opportunity to meet their needs while not disrupting the class.

Varied seating in this informal atmosphere provides an alternative to sitting at the same desk for long periods.

To encourage student input and application of school objectives to students' interests and career possibilities, students may develop learning centers on a rotating contractual basis with the teacher. The center reflects students' specific expertise and interests, while relating to an academic subject. This is also an opportunity to utilize the resources of the community. Students might collaborate with parents, each other, or community leaders to assemble resources for the center. The teacher may assist in clarifying the objectives for using materials in such a center.

Learning centers provide opportunities for students to be involved at a personal level, to learn at an individual pace, to be stimulated by a variety of styles, and to develop independence with the help of other students or the teacher. The opportunities to have personal learning needs met provide incentives for students to persist in learning.

Teachers need to keep in mind that:

- what works for one student may not work for another since each student is unique;
- changes in behavior take time and patience is necessary;
- feedback from students is essential and learning strategies can be adapted accordingly; and
- flexibility in teaching styles encourages a variety of learning styles.

Classroom Activities to Build Persistence

If you want students to develop their ability to persist in academic achievement, you must teach such skills. Some classroom activities that can help teachers and students focus on persistence include:

- discussions about classroom norms—what each individual would like the classroom to be and how these goals can be achieved;
- discussions of how school may help students to achieve their aspirations and to pursue areas of interest;
- opportunities for students to tackle fun puzzles or problems in small learning groups and share how they approached their work;
- opportunities for students to use a hands-on approach to learning that helps to make learning concrete and relevant;
- use of inquiry strategies for discovering information;
- instruction on collecting, organizing, and analyzing data and evaluating its meaning;
- problem-solving sessions where a variety of approaches are explored;
- discussions on the value of persisting, exploring when it has paid off for individuals and the good feelings that result from accomplishment;

- individual or small-group talks about what intrinsic rewards students get from doing a good job of any kind (this also offers valuable information for identifying students' personalities and styles);
- discussions of minority role models, exploring how they were able to achieve, what problems they had in reaching their goals, and the value of persistence in overcoming their obstacles;
- use of scientific methods in problem-solving, including instruction on how to apply it in everyday life;
- development of good interpersonal skills, including developing the class as a learning community with its own culture, norms, supports and needs and establishing norms for providing feedback to students and teacher; and
- use of interest inventories for students to identify present and future interests and to use as a basis for setting goals.

IV

Worksheets to Diagnose and Support Persistent Behavior

We must know more about students if we are to help them become more persistent. We must observe behavior, listen to verbal and interactive responses, read what students write, and watch how students work by themselves and with others.

"Worksheet A: Indicators of Students' Persistent Behaviors" can be used to determine to what extent a student needs to have more persistent behavior. "Worksheet B: Teachers' Behaviors That Discourage Persistence" can be useful in identifying behaviors which do not encourage persistence. "Worksheet C: Teachers' Behaviors That Support Student Persistence" serves as a self-evaluation, asking "How can I create a learning environment that encourages students to be more persistent in their approach to learning?" "Worksheet D: Student Activities That Develop Persistence" will help teachers focus on helpful instructional strategies.

Worksheet A

Indicators of Students' Persistent Behaviors

Check the appropriate column on the right.
A = Always **S** = Sometimes
R = Rarely **N** = Never

Does the student:	A	S	R	N
complete work assigned?	☐	☐	☐	☐
volunteer to do more than the required assignments?	☐	☐	☐	☐
work for long periods of time without being distracted or bored?	☐	☐	☐	☐
attend class?	☐	☐	☐	☐
arrive on time for class?	☐	☐	☐	☐
accept responsibility for errors?	☐	☐	☐	☐
make thoughtful, educated guesses?	☐	☐	☐	☐
ask "why?" questions?	☐	☐	☐	☐
risk answers that may not be correct?	☐	☐	☐	☐
become actively involved in task-related activities?	☐	☐	☐	☐
seek out puzzles or word problems?	☐	☐	☐	☐
respond to open-ended, opinion-seeking and evaluative questions?	☐	☐	☐	☐
demonstrate goal-oriented, achievement-motivated behavior?	☐	☐	☐	☐
concentrate even when there are classroom disruptions?	☐	☐	☐	☐
ask for help when needed?	☐	☐	☐	☐

Worksheet B

Teachers' Behaviors That Discourage Persistence

Check the appropriate column on the right.

N = Never **S** = Sometimes **O** = Often

	N	S	O
Does the teacher:			
use inconsistent or inequitable rewards?	☐	☐	☐
expect and provide rewards for memory activities only?	☐	☐	☐
make statements such as "This is important because I say so"?	☐	☐	☐
use sarcasm or insults?	☐	☐	☐
have low expectations for student achievement?	☐	☐	☐
accept only one way of approaching a problem?	☐	☐	☐
use only highly competitive activities?	☐	☐	☐
use only one or two modes for learning, e.g., listen to lecture and read chapter?	☐	☐	☐
not admit own errors?	☐	☐	☐
offer no achievable, acceptable bench marks?	☐	☐	☐
compare student work excessively?	☐	☐	☐
accept unchecked assumptions about student motives?	☐	☐	☐
identify a "model student" for others to be like?	☐	☐	☐
not accept differences in temperament and style?	☐	☐	☐
say "you can't"?	☐	☐	☐
accept pain and physical discomfort in a physical setting?	☐	☐	☐
permit an unsafe environment?	☐	☐	☐
tolerate high levels of student frustration over tasks?	☐	☐	☐

Continued on next page

Worksheet B–*Continued*

	N	S	O
foster humiliation and embarrassment?	☐	☐	☐
set unchallenging tasks, a preponderance of seat work?	☐	☐	☐
give nonspecific direction, objectives, or criteria for achievement?	☐	☐	☐
not give timely, fair, and appropriate feedback on strengths and weaknesses?	☐	☐	☐

Worksheet C

Teachers' Behaviors That Support Student Persistence

Check the appropriate column on the right.
A = Always **S** = Sometimes
R = Rarely **N** = Never

	A	S	R	N
Instructional Interventions				
Does the teacher:				
ask open-ended questions?	☐	☐	☐	☐
communicate positive expectations?	☐	☐	☐	☐
state requirements for successful completion of assignments clearly and definitively? avoid ambiguous statements and directions?	☐	☐	☐	☐
encourage students to explore new ideas and approaches to problem-solving?	☐	☐	☐	☐
encourage student self-assessment and evaluation to identify strengths and weaknesses?	☐	☐	☐	☐
analyze the impact of teaching styles on students' learning and make appropriate adjustments in style?	☐	☐	☐	☐
encourage students to set realistic timetables for completing assignments?	☐	☐	☐	☐
help students identify milestones in reaching their goals?	☐	☐	☐	☐
assist students in celebrating milestones and utilizing failure as constructive learning for planning?	☐	☐	☐	☐
provide opportunities for students to use hands-on materials?	☐	☐	☐	☐
Curriculum Interventions				
Does the teacher:				
provide opportunities for students to relate their interests to required curriculum?	☐	☐	☐	☐

Continued on next page

Worksheet C–*Continued*

	A	S	R	N
provide as many choices in curriculum content and activities as possible?				
identify a wide range of knowledge and skills which students could acquire if they stayed with the task?				
provide opportunities for students to use hands-on materials?				
provide challenging work that is neither too easy nor too difficult?				
use multicultural curriculum supplements?				

Classroom Management Interventions

Does the teacher:

model cooperative and collaborative behavior by encouraging students' participation in classroom management decisions?				
demonstrate flexibility and fairness in situations which evoke conflict and potential classroom disruption?				
rotate classroom management responsibilities to give all students an opportunity to be leaders and problem solvers?				
reward and praise students' work equitably and consistently?				

Interpersonal Interventions

Does the teacher:

find opportunities to improve interpersonal skills?				
share problems and persistence techniques?				
provide appropriate verbal and concrete rewards for students' efforts?				
encourage cooperation between students?				
call on students by name?				

Continued on next page

Worksheet C–*Continued*

	A	S	R	N
admit own learning role by acknowledging information provided by students?	☐	☐	☐	☐
empathize with students' thoughts, feelings, sense of insecurity, and age-related concerns?	☐	☐	☐	☐
establish a warm personal relationship that helps students know they are liked and expected to succeed?	☐	☐	☐	☐
send positive messages home as well as concerns?	☐	☐	☐	☐

Worksheet D

Student Activities That Develop Persistence

Check the appropriate column on the right.
E = Well Established **S** = Sometimes Used
D = Developing **N** = Never

	E	S	D	N
Does the teacher utilize or encourage:				
puzzles with no time frame for completion?	☐	☐	☐	☐
decision-making such as flow diagrams, with a focus on making personal decision?	☐	☐	☐	☐
inventories to identify students' interests and motivations?	☐	☐	☐	☐
peer tutoring and using all students, not just stars, in teaching roles?	☐	☐	☐	☐
small units of work that can be completed before moving to next unit?	☐	☐	☐	☐
learning contracts, developed cooperatively between a student and the teacher, for relating pace and content to the interests and learning style of the student?	☐	☐	☐	☐
solving mysteries?	☐	☐	☐	☐
processes that encourage skills in listening, perception checking, investigation, organizing, analysis, and evaluation?	☐	☐	☐	☐
establishment of achievable but challenging goals?	☐	☐	☐	☐
norms of cooperation in the classroom?	☐	☐	☐	☐
opportunities for students to complete cooperative projects and learning?	☐	☐	☐	☐
activities to develop independent learning skills?	☐	☐	☐	☐
student learning-style inventories for self-awareness and for teachers to identify teaching and learning strategies?	☐	☐	☐	☐
guided practice for learning new skills?	☐	☐	☐	☐

Continued on next page

Worksheet D–*Continued*

	E	S	D	N
linking new knowledge to students' background?	☐	☐	☐	☐
open-ended activities in terms of time, gradually increasing time constraints?	☐	☐	☐	☐
group mastery learning?	☐	☐	☐	☐
individualized mastery learning instruction?	☐	☐	☐	☐
opportunities for persons who like each other and work well together to do so?	☐	☐	☐	☐
peer recognition and affirmation opportunities?	☐	☐	☐	☐
multicultural subject content?	☐	☐	☐	☐
opportunities for students to choose or negotiate activities or projects due?	☐	☐	☐	☐
values clarification, focused on achievement and persistence?	☐	☐	☐	☐
role models who discuss career possibilities and persistence with students?	☐	☐	☐	☐
multicultural curriculum?	☐	☐	☐	☐
skill development in following directions; communicating; and collecting, organizing, analyzing and evaluating data?	☐	☐	☐	☐
displays of student work, based on a variety of criteria, especially student persistence?	☐	☐	☐	☐
learning centers relating subject matter and students' interests?	☐	☐	☐	☐

V

Conclusion and Impact

What we understand about persistence strongly suggests that as a result of student academic persistence:

- classroom life is more exciting;
- the student is better able to set and achieve personal goals;
- the student will be valued more by friends and community; and
- the student has a better chance of having an economically satisfying future and of becoming an achieving adult citizen.

Learning to persist and persisting to learn are priorities in the educational development of our youth. Youngsters have aspirations and needs. We can help them learn to work the system in ways that are self- and societal-serving. By helping a student to persist in becoming a professional, technician, or artist, educators help to save a country that depends on the minds and souls of its people. Isn't that why we teach?

Appendix*

Teacher Behaviors That Communicate Positive Expectations

1. **Using Wait-time**
   After calling on a student, mentally count to eight. Give students plenty of time to respond.
2. **Discussing Wrong Answers**
   When students give incorrect or incomplete answers to questions, probe further with a series of questions to help the students locate and correct the error.
3. **Giving Appropriate Rewards**
   Reward the behavior you wish to encourage. Focus on intellectual quality and demonstrated performance. Avoid commenting on neatness when content of work is the real issue.
4. **Using Praise**
   Praise reinforces academic performance. Use it equally among all students. Avoid overuse of praise for socially acceptable behavior (typically directed towards females). Provide specific praise for academic skills.
5. **Giving Unambiguous Feedback**
   When commenting on a student's performance, give clear and specific feedback. Say what is right and wrong and avoid overuse of phrases, such as "okay," "good," "nice try," and "not quite." These phrases suggest that the student is not expected to improve.
6. **Giving More Attention**
   Focus on students who have received less attention from you in the past and initiate additional high-quality interactions both on a one-to-one basis and in groups.
7. **Providing Role Models**
   Use volunteers or other school personnel to model positive qualities or characteristics which differ from yours. People who represent a different race, culture, language, or sex or who exhibit different interests or skills increase students' exposure to others.
8. **Calling on Minority Students In a Variety of Ways**
   If you are accustomed to a single question-answer style, try varying the ways you call on students so that you present many opportunities to participate. You may:
   - ask for volunteers;
   - choose respondents;
   - have one student select respondents;
   - pair students and have them respond to each other; or
   - have groups develop answers and responses for the group.

9. **Changing Seating Arrangements**
   If you are accustomed to a single seating pattern, try changing the seating and moving your own desk. Try to spend time physically close to students who have been seated away from your usual location.
10. **Providing Challenges**
    Evaluate assignments and make sure there is an element of challenge. Tasks that are too limited suggest you lack confidence in the student.
11. **Varying Types of Questions**
    Concentrate on asking open-ended, thought-provoking questions with students who usually get "yes-no" questions. Occasionally ask students why and how they arrived at their answers.
12. **Encouraging Independence**
    When introducing an activity, give students every opportunity to do the task themselves. Demonstrate the task or rephrase instructions rather than doing it for them.
13. **Establishing Rules**
    When interacting with students, avoid punishing some students for behaviors you usually accept from others. Be sure that all students know the rules of your classroom. Hold them accountable for following the rules.

* *From Improving Minority Student Achievement: Focus on the Classroom* by Sheryl Denbo. Washington, DC: The Mid-Atlantic Center for Race Equity, The American University, 1986.

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